

America is now on track to pay down nearly \$300 billion in debt by the end of this year and to be debt-free by 2013. In this new era of surpluses, these “debt buybacks” will help us continue to pay down the debt, save money for American taxpayers, and lift the burden of interest payments off our children and grandchildren.

### **Statement on Senate Action on Judicial Nominations**

*March 9, 2000*

Today the Senate finally confirmed, after 4 years, Judge Richard Paez and, after 2 years, Marsha Berzon to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Both of these candidates bring extraordinary experience and diversity to the bench, both received the American Bar Association’s highest rating, both were approved by solid bipartisan majorities today, but unfortunately both were forced to wait far too long to receive votes.

This week the Senate also confirmed Judge Julio Fuentes of New Jersey, who becomes the first Hispanic to serve on the Third Circuit. Judge Fuentes had to wait a year for his vote, but when it finally came, he was approved unanimously by a vote of 93 to 0.

I want to thank the Senate for moving this process forward. But I want to repeat that dozens of qualified judicial nominees still await confirmation. Meanwhile, caseloads rise and backlogs mount. These fine Americans have offered themselves to serve our country—and they are entitled to an up or down vote. Election year politics should not be used as an excuse to slow down the confirmation process.

This is a good day for our country. But we must keep going. It’s what our nominees deserve and what justice demands.

### **Statement on Minimum Wage Legislation**

*March 9, 2000*

The minimum wage must be raised but not with a bill that stacks the deck against America’s working families. This bill repeals

key overtime protections, could reduce pension coverage for many families, and includes risky tax giveaways that threaten our prosperity and the future of Social Security and Medicare. Once again, Republicans in the House of Representatives have demonstrated that they would rather fight for special interests than give working families the raise they deserve.

I will veto the bill Republicans in the House passed tonight if it comes to my desk. Congress should send me a bill I can sign: a clean straightforward bill that raises the minimum wage by a dollar over 2 years.

### **Message to the Congress Transmitting the Report on Federal Advisory Committees**

*March 9, 2000*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

As provided by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended (Public Law 92–463; 5 U.S.C., App. 2, 6(c)), I hereby submit the *Twenty-seventh Annual Report on Federal Advisory Committees*, covering fiscal year 1998.

In keeping with my commitment to create a more responsive government, the executive branch continues to implement my policy of maintaining the number of advisory committees within the ceiling of 534 required by Executive Order 12838 of February 10, 1993. Accordingly, the number of discretionary advisory committees (established under general congressional authorizations) was again held to substantially below that number. During fiscal year 1998, 460 discretionary committees advised executive branch officials. The number of discretionary committees supported represents a 43 percent reduction in the 801 in existence at the beginning of my Administration.

Through the planning process required by Executive Order 12838, the total number of advisory committees specifically mandated by statute also continues to decline. The 388 such groups supported at the end of fiscal year 1998 represents a modest decrease from the 391 in existence at the end of fiscal year 1997. However, compared to the 439 advisory committees mandated by statute at the